The Primary Program
Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment Plans and Activities:
A Teacher's Self-Evaluation

Am I focusing on the learner and the learning (rather than on what has been learned)?

- Are my assessment practices helping me to be a "better" teacher—to work more effectively in enhancing student's development (rather than satisfying external, system-monitoring requirements)?
- Are my assessment activities meaningful to the students and contextualized within my classroom community (rather than trivial, artificial tasks)?
- Does what I am doing make sense to students, parents, and to me (rather than involving mysterious rituals and results that only experts can interpret)?
- Is assessment a dynamic, integral part of all classroom activities (rather than something that happens at the "end" when the learning is over)?
- Is assessment a shared collaborative activity in a community of discovery (rather than the sole right and responsibility of the teacher)?

From S. Jeroski, *Learner-focused Assessment: Helping Students Grow*, 1992.

Assessment and Evaluation in the Primary Program

Common Understandings

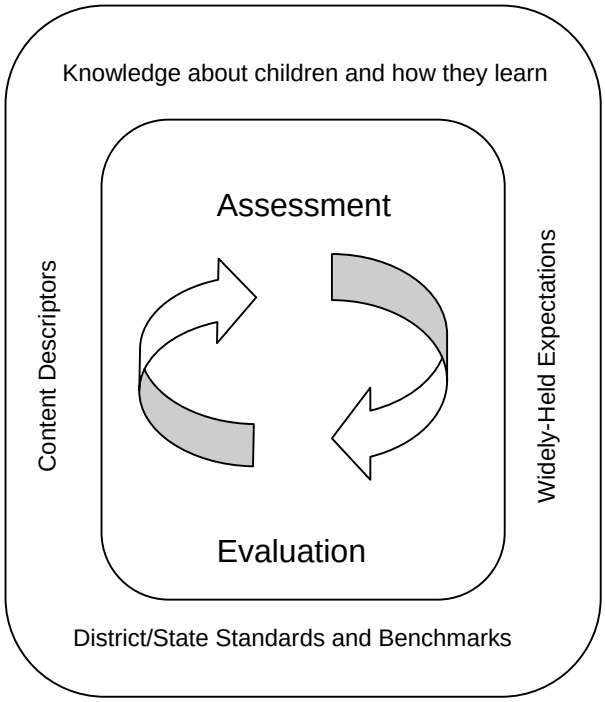
"Assessment" and "evaluation" are terms often used interchangeably. In the Primary Program, a distinction is made between the two terms. Assessment is the process of gathering evidence of what a child can do. Evaluation is the process of interpreting that evidence and making judgments and decisions based on that evidence. The quality of information gained through assessment determines the quality of evaluation; that is, evaluation is only as good as the assessment on which it is based.

Assessment and evaluation are one process (see Figure 1). In the context of the classroom, teachers carry out both parts of that process, often almost simultaneously. For example, a teacher's observations of a child and conference with that child (assessment) may lead to an immediate decision (evaluation) about instruction. For the purposes of the Primary Program, we use the terms assessment and evaluation together, reflecting the integrated nature of the process.

Good teaching is inseparable from good assessing.

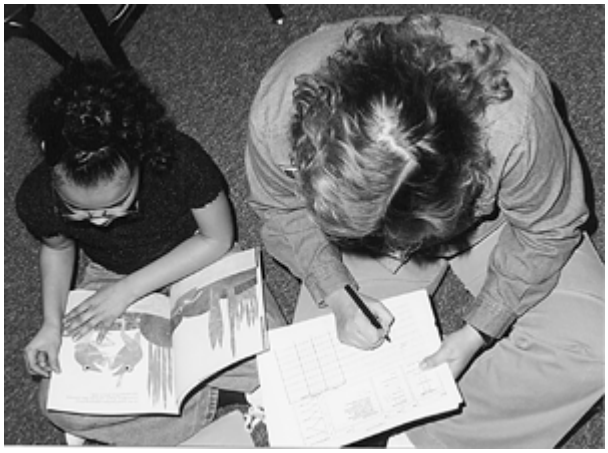
Wiggins, 1989

Figure 1
The Continuous Process of Assessment and Evaluation



Assessment

Assessment is the systematic process of gathering evidence of what a child can do. Assessment techniques are authentic, continuous, and free from cultural, gender, and linguistic biases. In the school environment, assessment begins in the classroom. Assessment techniques occur in the context of the classroom environment; they mirror the actual learning experiences in the classroom; and they are carried on in an unobtrusive manner. Observing children, conferencing, and examining multiple samples of children's representations of their learning, provide the evidence upon which to plan learning experiences appropriate for each child.



Throughout the assessment process, the teacher shares information and interpretations and invites active participation from children and parents. The teacher views assessment as an integral part of instruction. The children see assessment as another learning experience.

Evaluation

Evaluation is the ongoing process of making judgments and decisions based on the interpretation of evidence gathered through assessment. The purposes of evaluation are to make informed instructional decisions and to provide a basis for reporting progress to the child, to parents, and to school personnel.

Evaluation is based on learning demonstrated by the child in relation to the goals of the Primary Program, Widely-Held Expectations, curriculum expectations, district standards and benchmarks, and the descriptors of children's learning. Descriptors and Widely-Held Expectations, reflecting the range of growth throughout the primary years, help the teacher describe children's learning in developmental terms. Evaluation assists the teacher in adjusting instruction to enhance and extend learning, while supporting learners by providing information on their achievements. For students with special needs, evaluations must be considered and routinely reviewed by the teacher.

Self-evaluation and reflection assist children in becoming independent and autonomous learners. Teachers nurture the process of self-evaluation as they guide children to be reflective and as they help children recognize their accomplishments and identify their learning needs. With repeated opportunities to evaluate their work, children understand the significance of self-evaluation as a tool for lifelong learning.

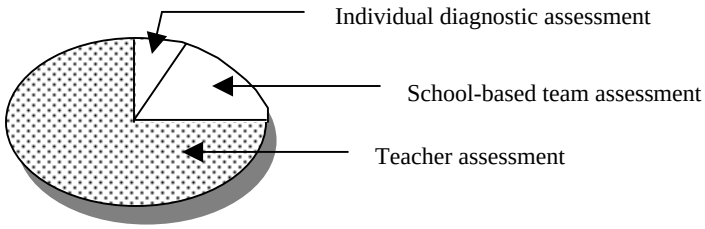
Collaborative Efforts—Assessment and Evaluation for All Children

Assessment demonstrates children's overall strengths and progress, what children can do, not just their wrong answers or what they cannot do or know.

National Association for the Education of Young Children & National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 1991

Even after extensive ongoing classroom assessment and evaluation, the teacher may still have unanswered questions about some children. In such instances, the teacher and a school-based student assistance team collaborate to collect further information for a problem-solving meeting. For some children, this may indicate the need for more diagnostic assessment completed by a multidisciplinary team which includes the classroom teacher and qualified specialists. For children qualifying for special education services, the team then develops an individual plan for learning. The student assistance team may also need to address concerns raised by the assessment and evaluation process itself. If "high stakes" decisions (labeling, grouping, tracking, retaining, placement) are going to be made, safeguards are necessary to assure appropriate decisions and actions are taken. Schools and programs need to work to make sure that assessment and instructional practices are aligned with developmental characteristics and needs.

Assessment of Children



When assessment procedures are carried out by professionals other than classroom teachers, the teacher continues to have prime responsibility for both the child and for continuing classroom instruction and assessment. The chart above provides an approximation of the appropriate proportion of various forms of assessment.

Classroom Assessment

In the primary classroom, knowing what to do and how to support children's learning requires the teacher to be informed about children's strengths, needs, and the skills and knowledge required for that grade level. Teachers need to know about children's progress and difficulties in learning so they can make instructional decisions that benefit the children. Good teaching and ongoing assessment are strongly linked to student success.

Classroom assessment consists of a variety of methods of assessment that provide information to both the teacher and the child that helps to monitor and document children's progress over time. This is necessary to insure that instruction is responsive and appropriately matched to what children

are and are not able to do. It also allows for teachers to customize instruction to meet individual needs or to identify children who might benefit from more intensive or specialized instruction (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000).

Classroom assessment for all students should be:

- Aligned to instructional goals
- An integral, enriching part of learning and instruction
- Student-centered
- Reflective of individual needs and cultural influences
- Non-threatening and motivating
- On-going to provide ample opportunities for success
- Aimed at development of self-assessment skills
- Communicated to a variety of audiences
  (Nebraska Department of Education, 1999)

The time has come to fundamentally rethink the relationship between assessment and effective schooling. This reevaluation must center not on how we assess student achievement but on how we use assessment in pursuit of student success.

Stiggins, 1999

Linking Assessment and Instruction

Accurate and effective assessment of children's knowledge, skills, and attitudes in content areas helps a teacher more accurately match instructional strategies with how and what the children are learning. Both formal and informal assessments are necessary to gain a complete picture of each child's strengths and areas of need. The assessment decision-making model that appears later in this section shows how this process can occur in the classroom.

Effective assessment makes it possible for teachers to:

- Monitor and document children's progress over time
- Ensure that instruction is responsive and appropriately matched to what children are and are not able to do
- Customize instruction to meet individual children's strengths and needs
- Enable children to observe their own growth and development
- Identify children who might benefit from more intensive levels of instruction, such as individual tutoring, or other interventions (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000)

Learning is an interactive, complex and multifaceted process that requires a variety of instructional strategies and approaches. While the child is the one actually engaged in the construction of knowledge, it is critical that teachers and parents maintain a supportive and instructive role in the process (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, and Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000). Support for children can range from direct or explicit instruction to exploration opportunities where they interact with meaningful, relevant, and engaging materials. Instruction is based on careful selection of teaching and learning strategies that match the needs of individual or groups of children with specific skills being taught.

Large-Scale Assessment

Large-scale assessments are standardized tests or other forms of assessment that are designed to be administered to a large group of children at the same time. These assessments are administered under prescribed conditions to provide information about performance so that results for buildings, districts, states, or nations can be fairly compared. These norm-referenced or criterion-referenced assessments are often intended for purposes of comparing and sorting children and for decision-making at the instructional support or policy levels.

A Look at Classroom Assessment and Large-scale Assessment

Classroom Assessment		Large-scale Assessment
Instructional decision-making Child, classroom, or instructional issues Match instructional practices Measures how students learn, as well as, what students know/have learned	**Purpose**	Accountability Child placement or system issues Match norms or criterion Measures what students know/have learned
On-going Objective and/or subjective Comparability less important than making instructional decisions Greater variety of methods	**Method**	One time, infrequent Tend to be objectively scored Comparability critical across classrooms A few very efficient methods
Traits that change over time Skills and knowledge within the context of classroom curriculum and instruction	**Content**	Traits that are stable over time Skills and knowledge abstracted from classroom context
May or may not be standard for all in the classroom	**Administration**	Standard for all
Scores, descriptions, judgments, profiles Immediate feedback	**Results**	Scores Delayed feedback
Teachers, students, parents	**Audience**	Policy-makers, administrators, teachers, parents
Data collector, interpreter, and user	**Role of Assessor**	Uninvolved data collector
Positive impact on student learning Defined by each teacher	**Meaning of Quality**	Technical standards of validity and reliability Defined by assessment field

Adapted from works by:
Morrow, L. M. (1997). *Literacy development in the early years,* (3rd ed.). Needham Heights, NJ: Allyn & Bacon.
Stiggins, R. J. (1997). *Student-centered classroom assessment (2nd ed.).* Upper Saddle, NJ: Merrill
Stiggins, R. J. (1998). *Professional development in classroom assessment: Learning team training guide for study of student-centered classroom assessment.* Portland, OR: Assessment Training Institute.
Stiggins, R. J. (1999). Personal communication.

Purposes of Assessment and Evaluation

The purpose of assessment and evaluation is to support and enhance the child's learning. Thoughtful, sensitive, accurate, supportive assessment and evaluation are prerequisites for learning. They are crucial in enhancing children's growth and development. They are fundamental to the success of the primary program. Assessments and evaluations are used to make decisions about the learning process **of every child** on a continuous basis.

Assessing and teaching are inseparable and intertwined processes. As part of the teaching-learning process, effective assessment will:

- Gather evidence on what a child can do, determining individual strengths and learning needs
- Help the teacher make informed instructional decisions, set learning goals, and shape a curriculum based on the strengths and needs of the child
- Provide feedback to the child
- Help the child develop and value the practice of assessing and evaluating his or her own learning
- Promote the child's growth and development in all goal areas of the program
- Provide a basis for communicating progress to the child, to the parents, to school personnel, and to the community
- Nurture and develop a positive self-concept in the child
- Enable the learner and promote lifelong learning

Teachers nurture the process of self-evaluation as they guide children to be reflective and as they help children recognize their accomplishments and identify their learning needs. With repeated opportunities to evaluate their work, children understand the significance of self-evaluation as a tool for lifelong learning.

In 1998, the Goal I Early Childhood Assessments Resource Group included the following information and recommendations in their report that was submitted to The National Goals Panel (pp. 6–7, 35–36):

> **Important Purposes of Assessment for Young Children**
> The intended use of an assessment—its purpose—determines every other aspect of how the assessment is conducted. Purpose determines the content of the assessment (What should be measured?); methods of data collection (Should the procedures be standardized? Can data come from the child, the parent, or the teacher?); technical requirements of the assessment (What level of reliability and validity must be established?); and, finally, the stakes or consequences of the assessment, which in turn determine the kinds of safeguards necessary to protect against potential harm from fallible assessment-based decisions.

There should be no high-stakes accountability testing of individual children before the end of third grade.

Goal I Early Childhood Assessments Resource Group, 1998

For example, if data from a statewide assessment are going to be used for school accountability, then it is important that data be collected in a standardized way to ensure comparability of school results. If children in some schools are given practice ahead of time so that they will be familiar with the task formats, then children in all schools should be provided with the same practice; teachers should not give help during the assessment or restate the questions unless it is part of the standard administration to do so; and all of the assessments should be administered in approximately the same week of the school year.

In contrast, when a teacher is working with an individual child in a classroom trying to help that child learn, assessments almost always occur in the context of activities and tasks that are already familiar, so practice or task familiarity is not at issue. In the classroom context, teachers may well provide help while assessing to take advantage of the learning opportunity and to figure out exactly how a child is thinking by seeing what kind of help makes it possible to take the next steps. For teaching and learning purposes, the timing of assessments makes the most sense if they occur on an ongoing basis as particular skills and content are being learned. Good classroom assessment is disciplined, not haphazard, and, with training, teachers expectations can reflect common standards. Nonetheless, assessments devised by teachers as part of the learning process lack the uniformity and the standardization that is necessary to ensure comparability, essential for accountability purposes.

Similarly, the technical standards for reliability and validity are much more stringent for high-stakes accountability assessment than for informal assessments used by individual caregivers and teachers to help children learn. The consequences of accountability assessments are much greater, so the instruments used must be sufficiently accurate to ensure that important decisions about a child are not made as the result of measurement error. In addition, accountability assessments are usually “one-shot,"” stand-alone events. In contrast, caregivers and teachers are constantly collecting information over long periods of time and do not make high-stakes decisions. If they are wrong one day about what a child knows or is able to do, then the error is easily remedied the next day.

Serious misuses of testing with young children occur when assessments intended for one purpose are used inappropriately for other purposes. For example, the content of IQ measures intended to identify children for special education is not appropriate content to use in planning instruction. At the same time, assessments designed for instructional planning may not have sufficient validity and technical accuracy to support high-stakes decisions.

An appropriate assessment system may include different assessments for different categories of purpose, such as:

- assessments to support learning,
- assessments for identification of special needs,
- assessments for program evaluation and monitoring trends, and
- assessments for high-stakes accountability.

Conclusions

Assessment of young children is important both to support the learning of each individual child and to provide data—at the district, state, and national level—for improving services and educational programs. At the level of the individual child, teaching and assessment are closely linked. Finding out, on an ongoing basis, what a child knows and can do, helps parents and teachers decide how to pose new challenges and provide help with what the child has not yet mastered. Teachers also use a combination of observation and formal assessments to evaluate their own teaching and make improvements. At the policy level, data are needed about the preconditions of learning—such as the adequacy of health care, child care, and preschool services. Direct measures of children’s early

learning are also needed to make sure that educational programs are on track in helping students reach high standards by the end of third grade.

Assessing young children accurately is much more difficult than for older students and adults, because of the nature of early learning and because the language skills needed to participate in formal assessments are still developing. Inappropriate testing of young children has sometimes led to unfair and harmful decisions. Such testing abuses occur primarily for one of two reasons: either a test designed for one purpose is improperly used for another purpose, or testing procedures appropriate for older children are used inappropriately with younger children. In making its recommendations, the Resource Group has emphasized how technical requirements for assessments must be tailored to each assessment purpose, and we have tried to explain how the increasing reliability and validity of measurement for ages from birth to age 8 should guide decisions about what kinds of assessments can be administered accurately at each age.

Four categories of assessment purpose were identified, with accompanying recommendations for educators and policymakers:

1. Assessing to promote children's learning and development. The most important reason for assessing young children is to help them learn. To this end, assessments should be closely tied to preschool and early grades curriculum, and should be a natural part of instructional activities. Policymakers should support the development or provision of assessment materials, to be used instructionally, that exemplify important and age appropriate learning goals. States should also support professional development to help teachers learn to use benchmark information to extend children's thinking.

2. Assessing to identify children for health and special services. Screening or a referral procedure should be in place to ensure that children suspected of having a health or learning problem are referred for in-depth evaluation. Given the potential for misuse of cognitive screening measures, states that mandate screening tests should monitor how they are used and should take extra steps to avoid inappropriate uses. IQ–like tests should not be used to exclude children from school or to plan instruction. Often, the need for costly assessments could be eliminated if intensive language and literacy programs were more broadly available for all of the groups deemed educationally at-risk, e.g., children living in poverty, children with mild cognitive and language disabilities, and children with early reading difficulties.

Ultimately, our goal is to set high expectations for early learning and development, to make sure that no child who falls behind goes unnoticed, and at the same time to help parents and the public understand how varied are the successful paths of early learning, depending on the rate of development, linguistic and cultural experiences, and community contexts.

Goal 1 Early Childhood Assessments Resource Group, 1998

3. Assessing to monitor trends and evaluate programs and services. The kinds of assessment that teachers use in preschool and the early grades to monitor children's learning are not sufficiently reliable or directly comparable for uses outside the classroom. Before age 5, assessment systems designed to gather data at the state or national level should focus on social indicators that describe the conditions of learning, e.g., the percentage of low-income children who attend quality preschool programs. Beginning at age 5, it is possible to develop large-scale assessment systems to report on trends in early learning, but matrix sampling should be used to ensure technical accuracy and at the same time protect individual children from test misuse.

4. Assessing academic achievement to hold individual students, teachers, and schools accountable. *There should be no high-stakes accountability testing of individual children before the end of third grade.* This very strong recommendation does not imply that members of the Resource Group are against accountability or against high standards. In fact, instructionally relevant assessments designed to support student learning should reflect a clear continuum of progress in Grades K, 1, and 2

that leads to expected standards of performance for the third and fourth grades. Teachers should be accountable for keeping track of how well their students are learning and for responding appropriately, but the technology of testing is not sufficiently accurate to impose these decisions using an outside assessment.

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Adapted: Shepard, L.; Kagan, S. L. & Wurtz, E., (Eds.). (1998). *Principles and recommendations for early childhood assessments.* Washington, DC: National Education Goals Panel.

Principles of Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation that support and enhance children's learning and teachers' decision-making are based on a number of important principles. The following general principles should guide decisions, policies, and practices when assessing young children.

Benefits for the Learner

The learner should be at the heart of all assessment practices. Assessment and evaluation should benefit the learner either in direct services to be provided or in improved quality of educational programs and instructional strategies.

- **A classroom assessment and evaluation program is primarily concerned with enabling the learner.** Children can and do improve. An effective assessment and evaluation program focuses on identifying what children can do and documenting evidence that children are developing and improving.

- **An effective assessment and evaluation program is constructive.** Assessment and evaluation support and enhance learning and development by focusing on what they are attempting to do. Assessment and evaluation do not focus on deficits or negative aspects.

Students can hit any target they can see that holds still for them.

Stiggins, 1999

- **Assessment and evaluation facilitate the transfer of learning.** When children are encouraged to reflect on and evaluate their own learning, they gain understanding of the processes they have used. As they develop this metacognitive awareness, they are able to achieve control of the strategies and skills they have practices and to deliberately use these in new situations. Similarly, when teachers reflect on and evaluate various aspects of a learning experience, they gain important insights which they can apply to new learning activities.

- **Assessment and evaluation support the learner's risk-taking.** Assessment and evaluation look not only at what a child can do, but also at what the child is trying to do. The development of oral communication is a dynamic process. It requires that the child become aware of particular

skills or strategies and seek new ways and opportunities to use them. Through use, the child gains insights, begins to formulate generalizations, and internalizes what he or she has learned. The process is one of experimentation and of repeated trial and error. Obviously, this can only take place in an environment that supports risk-taking, one that allows and recognizes errors and corrections as part of the development process.

Considerations, Forms, and Methods

Young children learn at different rates and in different ways than do older students and adults. Assessment and evaluation programs must be tailored accordingly.

- **Assessments and evaluations should be tailored to a specific purpose and should be reliable, valid, and fair for that purpose.** Assessments and evaluations designed for one purpose or grade level are not necessarily valid if used for other purposes or grade levels. Procedures and policies may need to be developed to ensure that assessment practices lead to results that are accurate and useful for the given purpose.

- **Assessments should be age-appropriate in both content and the method(s) of data collection.** Assessments should address the full range of learning and developmental areas, including language, cognition, physical health and well-being, motor skills, social and emotional, general knowledge, and approaches to learning. Methods of assessment should recognize that children often need familiar contexts in order to fully demonstrate their skills and abilities. Sometimes the teacher may need to rely on alternatives to paper-and-pencil tasks for accurate data.

> *Assessment avoids approaches that place children in artificial situations, impede the usual learning and developmental experiences in the classroom, or divert children from their natural learning processes.*
>
> National Association for the Education of Young Children & National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 1991

- **Assessment and evaluation are current and free of cultural, gender, and linguistic bias.** To ensure that evaluation procedures are fair for all children, the teacher chooses procedures and instruments that do not place any child or group of children at a disadvantage. The teacher sensitively and thoughtfully adapts and modifies procedures as required in order to accommodate children's cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and facility with the language of instruction. Similarly, assessment and evaluation allow for equal opportunities for both boys and girls.

- **Assessment and evaluation are subjective.** All assessment and evaluation procedures involve making judgments. A judgment is subjective, and making judgments is a subjective process. The very process of choosing which assessment tool to use is, in itself, subjective. However, judgments are more reliable when they are based on multiple authentic evidence. The teacher, therefore, interprets judgments cautiously and interprets them in the context of his or her knowledge of the individual child, of the learning situation, and of the process of learning in general.

- **Effective assessment and evaluation are comprehensive.** Assessment and evaluation focus on all the goals of the program, not just those which can be easily and objectively assessed. While it is often difficult to evaluate, for example, the development of attitudes and values (to work cooperatively with others), or the development of higher order, more complex skills and behaviors (skill in facilitating group problem-solving), these are nevertheless given appropriate emphasis. It is better to make a tentative, subjective decision about an important goal or stage of development (ability to select a suitable chapter book), than an absolute, objective judgment about a trivial one (spelling "calendar" correctly).

- **Effective decision-making is based on systematic opportunities to observe children and their learning in a supportive environment.** To demonstrate what the teacher wishes to assess and evaluate, children must engage in specific tasks and activities where they display the attitudes, skills and knowledge a teacher wishes to find out about. A child can best do this in an environment that is encouraging and supportive. To make valid judgments about any aspect of a child's development, the teacher, therefore, ensures that assessment elicits from a child whatever it is the teacher wishes to find out about and that this takes place in an appropriate climate.

Users and Uses

Effective assessment and evaluation of learning relies upon gathering data from multiple sources in varied formats. Teachers look beyond a single performance or outcome and ask how, why, and when the child is doing something or behaving in a particular way. The child is also encouraged to reflect on their own learning, considering both the processes used and the product completed.

- **Assessment and evaluation encourage the child to have an important role to play in monitoring his or her own learning and development.** Assessment and evaluation are not something that is done to students. The process recognizes learners as active participants in their own learning and in the evaluation of that learning. The teacher helps to make learning activities purposeful by sharing expectations with children and encouraging them to reflect on their own growth.

- **Parents should be a valued source of assessment information, as well as an audience for assessment results.** Because of the fallibility of direct measures of young children, assessments should include multiple sources of evidence, especially reports from parents and teachers. Assessment results should be shared with parents as part of an ongoing process that involves parents in their child's education.

- **The teacher selects assessment and evaluation procedures and instruments in the light of program goals, curricular expectations, learning opportunities, and classroom practices.** The context of the learning situation determines the appropriateness of any particular assessment and evaluation technique or instrument. Assessment and evaluation are integrated with instruction; children have systematic opportunities to develop those learnings which are the focus of assessment and evaluation.

- **Assessment and evaluation are an integral part of instructional decision-making. In this process, the teacher is the major instructional decision-maker.** Assessment and evaluation imply that, somewhere along the child's learning path, certain judgments and decisions are made. Values are implicit in this process. Teachers cannot distance themselves from these judgments and decisions, nor should they. No one other than the classroom teacher has the range or depth of information about the child's classroom learning and performance. However, as classroom teachers collaborate with other professionals, they gain additional information and valuable guidance. The insights acquired through such consultation assist the teacher with instructional decision-making. In the last analysis, the classroom teacher maintains the prime responsibility for assessment and evaluation of the children in the classroom.

- **Assessment and evaluation imply that, at some time, decisions will be made and some action will follow.** Assessment and evaluation are purposeful: information is collected, interpreted, and synthesized in order to enhance the teacher's and children's decision-making. Obtaining information about a particular aspect of learning or a particular component of the program implies that, at some time in the future, some course of action will follow. The teacher does not have time to gather information which is not useful in terms of the learning situation. The teacher continually asks, "What will I do when I find out X?"

- **Assessment and evaluation are based on multiple observations.** In order to make decisions or judgments about any aspect of learning, the teacher observes the representation of that learning a number of times in a number of contexts. On any one single occasion, in any one given situation (working alone rather than working with a partner), or through any one medium of representation (writing rather than oral presentation), a child's behavior may not be a valid indication of learning. The teacher obtains a more accurate and more complete picture of the child's learning by collecting multiple, diverse evidence of student accomplishments.

Supporting Learning: Assessment/Evaluation/Reporting

In the primary program

We used to…	*but…*	*So now…*	*because…*
Place more emphasis on what children could not or should not do	We learned this focus undermined the confidence of many children, and we could be more supportive of their accomplishments.	We begin with what children can do, then consider their learning needs.	This helps them to develop confidence and gives a foundation for building and further refining skills and knowledge.
Fail children who did not meet pre-set expectations for behavior or ability to do tasks	We found that some children doubted their ability to learn and this increased the probability of their dropping out of school.	Teachers give children the support needed to allow them to make continuous progress.	This maintains their self-esteem and confidence, the prompting of further learning strengthening the disposition to learn.
Use pencil-and-paper tasks as the main way of assessing and evaluating children	We now know this gave a limited view of what children could do.	We encourage children to represent their learning in a variety of ways (show what they know).	This provides opportunities for more children to demonstrate their intelligence and to be successful learners.
Compare learners to each other	This made comparisons more important than the actual learning.	Each learner is evaluated on what he or she can do in relation to the Widely-Held Expectations and skills are continually refined.	This helps each child feel valued as a learner and builds on individual strengths, which encourages a good start toward lifelong learning.
Use checklists for children's report cards	They gave limited information about what children could do.	We use information from observations, conferences, and collections of children's work to develop anecdotal reports.	They give more comprehensive information about what children can do.
Use letter grades for reporting children's progress (A, B, C, G, S, NI)	Letter grades were dependent on teacher and parent interpretation and often focused on surface knowledge rather than understanding.	We use anecdotal reports to describe children's learning.	They give a more detailed picture of what children can do and identify future learning goals.
Exclude children from the assessment and evaluation process	This did not encourage the development of self-evaluation skills.	Children are encouraged to take a more active role in assessing and evaluating their own progress and with the help of the teacher, set future learning goals.	As children construct meaning of the world around them, this process encourages self-evaluation, independent learning, and a commitment to further learning.
Plan conferences for parents and teachers to exchange information	This often overlooked the people with the most relevant information—the children as developing learners.	Teachers are beginning to plan ways to include children in the conference with parents.	Together they can develop a shared understanding of children's abilities, interests and learning needs, resulting in the setting of realistic learning goals.

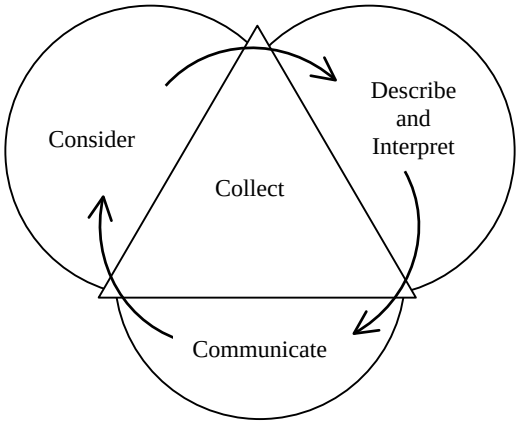
A Decision-Making Model for Assessment and Evaluation

Too often students' progress and teachers' performance are measured only by students' performance on standardized exams….This practice can unnecessarily label some students as failures and place undue pressure on teachers to 'teach to the tests' to ensure high scores by their students. In at least some cases, performance-based assessments that call upon students to write, make oral presentations, and work with other students to solve real world problems may provide richer pictures of student's ability and progress.

National Commission on Children, 1991

Assessment is the process of gathering evidence of what a child can do. Evaluation is the process of making decisions about information gained through assessment (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
A Decision-Making Model



Assessment and evaluation are enabling when the teacher helps the child to identify what he or she can do and when the teacher collaborates with the child to set future goals in the light of learning needs. Assessment and evaluation provide the information and direction vital to the teaching-learning process.

Our decisions about learning, teaching, assessment and evaluation must be congruent. We cannot espouse and implement one philosophy of learning and teaching, and evaluate from a totally different perspective.

Anthony, Johnson, Mickelson, & Preece, 1989

In the learning environment, the process of assessment and evaluation is embedded in classroom instruction: curriculum, assessment, and evaluation are continuous. The teacher carries out most assessment through naturally occurring classroom events. (If the evidence cannot be collected in a natural setting, the teacher may need to structure situations where specific behaviors may be observed. Such situations still need to reflect appropriate classroom practice.) Evaluation is carried out in a constructive manner so children view it as a learning experience building a foundation for self-evaluation.

The Primary Program model of assessment and evaluation is a decision-making model. It is based on knowledge about children and how they learn. The evaluation cycle (consider, collect, describe, interpret and communicate) enables the teacher to report the child's achievements to the child, to parents, and to school personnel.

The decision-making model outlines procedures to facilitate ongoing assessment and evaluation. Some factors teachers consider as they use this model are:

- Knowledge about children and how they learn as the guide for all decisions
- Decisions at all stages of the process:
  - Who and what needs to be considered?
  - What and how do we collect evidence?
  - How can we describe what the child can do?
  - What patterns emerge from interpreting the evidence?
  - Who needs this information?

The assessment process is not a linear one. At any point during the process, the teacher may decide to continue or to go back to a previous stage and refocus or redirect the process. For example, after collecting some evidence, the teacher may use this information to describe what the child can do, or the teacher may decide to reevaluate the original question and consider a new one.

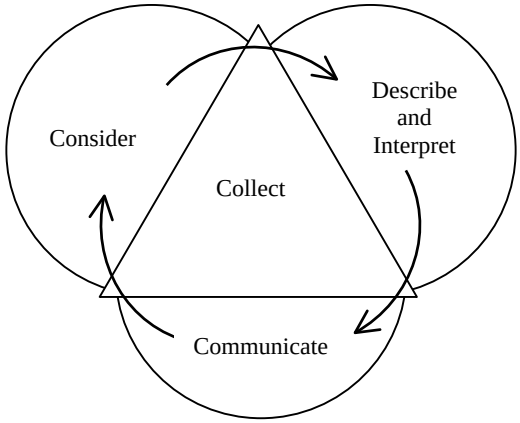
- Communication with the child occurs throughout the process. Information may also be shared, informally or formally, with parents and school personnel at any time throughout the process.
- Collection of evidence occurs in the context of the learning environment and is related to the curricular expectations and primary program goals.

Consider…

Where do we begin?

- Who will be assessed and why?
- Who are all the participants in this assessment, (children, peers, parents, teachers, school personnel)?
- What will be assessed? What curriculum goal area?
- What assessment strategies will be used?
- Where will the assessment take place (classroom, playground, gym)?
- When will the assessment occur (during center time, in the course of writers' workshop)?
- How is the information to be collected? How is it to be recorded? How is it to be stored?

The Decision Making Model



Collect…

How can the information be found?
(See Collecting Assessment Evidence)

Observation of process:

Is it possible to observe the child interacting with peers, adults, and materials; in a variety of activities and contexts; and in the process of demonstrating what he or she knows?

Observation of product:

What representations of a child's thinking can be collected (drawings, paintings, writings, block construction, maps, graphics, charts, webs, projects, computer products, and other samples)?

Conversations and conferences:

What insights can the child contribute into his or her own learning?

What questions can the teacher ask to probe thinking?

Describe and Interpret…

On the basis of evidence collected, what can the child do? (Refer to Goals of the Primary Program, Widely-Held Expectations, State/district standards, and Descriptions of Learning in this section.)

- Have the child's past achievements and developmental characteristics been adequately considered?
- What is the significant evidence? Does more evidence need to be collected?
- What patterns emerge?
- What does the information tell us about a child's learning?
- Does the child need special accommodations and support?

Good teachers have always been kidwatchers. The concept of kidwatching is not new. It grows out of the child study movements that reached a peak in the 1930s providing a great deal of knowledge about human growth and development. Teachers can translate child study into its most universal form: learning about children by watching how they learn.

Goodman, 1996

Communication to the child, parent, and community…

Communication is a shared partnership intended to support a child's continued success in school.

Communication should consider:

- What the child can do
- The child's interests and attitudes
- The child's learning needs
- Plans for how the teacher and family can support or assist the child's learning.

How will we communicate this information?

- What is the most appropriate method of communicating this information (conversations, conferences, portfolios, reports)?
- With whom does this information need to be shared?
- Is there a plan in place for feedback or reflection after the information has been communicated?

Collecting Assessment Evidence

Children need to represent their thinking and learning in some way before the teacher can find out what they think or know or can do: this is the evidence for their learning. For purposes of assessment and evaluation, the teacher's task is to:

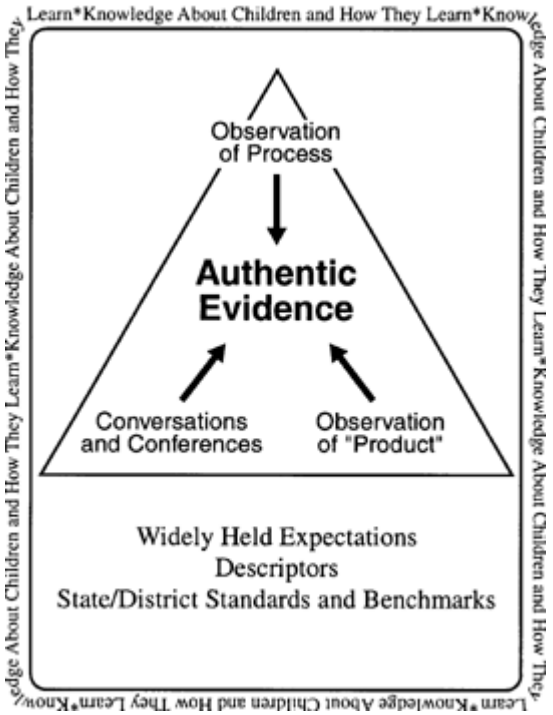
- Elicit this evidence from children
- Examine children's representations
- Collect and document over a period of time

The teacher does this by observing children, by talking and conferring with them, and by looking at the products children create (see Figure 3).

Figure 3
Collecting Authentic Evidence

Performance assessments, paper and pencil tests, and assessments based on personal communication all have a place in an educational system that values widely disparate outcomes. Our challenge is to align our various assessment options with the broad array of achievement targets we value.

Stiggins, 1991



If it is to be meaningful and if it is to have worth and significance, the assessment evidence collected from children must be authentic. Authentic evidence is evidence that predominantly:

- Is selected in terms of program goals and learning experiences
- Reflects the regular conditions of the classroom
- Documents growth in children's actual "products" rather than on work substitutes in contrived tasks
- Reflects some kind of real-life purpose, meaning, or validity.

Examples of Authentic and Not Authentic Evidence

Authentic	Not Authentic
▪ At the end of the term, each child writes a thank you letter to a favorite classroom visitor or volunteer.	▪ Every child writes a thank you letter which follows certain rules and submits it to the teacher.
▪ Over a period of a few weeks, every child has an opportunity to give a brief, informal book talk on a recent favorite book to a small group.	▪ Each child reads an assigned book and writes a book report.
▪ In the course of a reading conference, a child selects a favorite passage to read aloud to the teacher from a book she or he is currently reading.	▪ Each child reads aloud from a reader in a round-robin reading group.

Hypotheses drawn from any one source represent a partial view, tentative judgments may be confirmed or rejected by synthesizing the web of information considered as a whole. The result is a multidimensional conceptualization of students' literacy learning in a variety of contexts and situations.

Chapman, 1989

Using the Assessment Information

Assessment information is used to:

- Plan for instruction
- Provide a baseline for learning documentation
- Chart growth using developmental checklists
- Measure progress on district or state standards
- Match and evaluate program goals with child's needs
- Help a child advance a skill
- Provide feedback on teaching methods and curriculum
- Learn about the child's family/culture
- Share progress with parents

Do we judge our students to be deficient in writing, speaking, listening, artistic creation, finding and citing evidence, and problem-solving? Then let the tests ask them to write, speak, listen, create, do original research, and solve problems.

Wiggins, 1989

Assessment and the Unique Development of Young Children

Assessing children in the earliest years of life—from birth to age eight—is difficult because it is the period when young children's rates of physical, motor, and linguistic development outpace growth rates at all other stages. Growth is rapid, episodic, and highly influenced by environmental supports: nurturing parents, quality caregiving, and the learning setting.

Because young children learn in ways and at rates different from older children and adults, we must tailor our assessments accordingly. Because young children come to know things through listening, and because they often represent their knowledge better by showing than by talking or writing, paper-and-pencil tests are not adequate. Because young children do not have the experience to understand what the goals of formal testing are, testing interactions may be very difficult or impossible to structure appropriately. Because young children develop and learn so fast, tests given at one point in time may not give a complete picture of learning. And because young children's achievements at any point are the result of a complex mix of their ability to learn and past learning opportunities, it is a mistake to interpret measure of past learning as evidence of what could be learned.

For these reasons, how we assess young children and the principles that frame such assessment need special attention. What works for older children or adults will not work for younger children; they have unique needs that we, as adults, are obliged to recognize if we are to optimize their development.

Source: Goal 1 Early Childhood Assessment Resource Group. (1998). *Principles and recommendations for early childhood assessments.* Washington, DC: National Education Goals Panel. p 3–4. (Shepard, Kagan & Wurtz-Eds.)

Understanding the Collection of Authentic Evidence: How We Find Out What a Child Can Do?

Teachers find out what children know and can do by watching them in action, looking at collections of their work, and talking with them. When teachers collect and record this information over time, they develop a picture of each child's growth and learning progress. This authentic evidence provides teachers with information to make decisions about ways to best support and challenge further learning for each child.

Teachers' interpretations of the evidence and decisions about instruction are based on understanding how children grow and learn. Research-based knowledge about child development and learning, combined with the collective wisdom and common sense of parents and teachers, is essential for knowing how to evaluate and plan for learning in meaningful ways.

Widely-Held Expectations

In the Primary Program, "Widely-Held Expectations" provide a big picture of children's growth and development over time in each of the goal areas plus reading, writing, and mathematics. The Widely-Held Expectations, based on research about child development and learning, provide general *criteria* for what to look for or measure in children's growth and learning in the identified areas. Assessment and evaluation are the *processes* for measuring growth and learning progress. The Widely-Held Expectations, and other research-based developmental guidelines, help teachers to think about ways to support learning that is achievable and challenging. In addition, these guidelines provide developmental context to support higher levels of learning for each child as teachers address standards and benchmarks established at local and state levels.

Collecting Evidence

Authentic evidence is collected through teachers' observational notes, samples of children's work, and interactions with children and their families. In addition to watching and listening, observation involves skills in focused documentation to effectively relate what children can do. Samples of children's work are collected and organized in portfolios to demonstrate progress over time. Through conversations and conferences with children and parents, teachers have opportunities to exchange information and increase their understanding of children and their families.

To ensure validity and reliability, the teacher uses a variety of sources to assess children's progress. These, described in the following pages, include:

- Observing children involved in the learning process
- Looking at the products children make
- Engaging children in conversations and conferences

Collecting Authentic Evidence Through Observation of Process: Watching Children in Action

Observation is an important and comprehensive means of assessing and evaluating all behavior and learning in the classroom. By observing children thoughtfully, sensitively, and systematically within the natural setting of the classroom, the teacher:

- Learns about children.
- Begins to identify each child's unique interests, personality, learning style, strengths, differences, and learning needs.
- Uses this information to plan programs that best meet the needs of every student in the class.

Sometimes observation is the only way to assess and evaluate in the classroom. Examples range from children's emotions and feelings, to children's interactions with one another, to a variety of characteristics or traits such as curiosity and creativity. All these and others are understood and appraised only through observation.

It is the classroom teacher who is in the best position to make sensitive, accurate, and comprehensive observations of children. It is the classroom teacher who can best collect evidence of children's learning and growth over time, document it, and interpret it. It is the classroom teacher, ultimately, who best knows the children in his or her class.

Consider this scenario. The children are playing and learning in the classroom. You are totally involved with the children, attending to their needs and what they say and do. In the course of your day with the children, you notice things; you also remember some of them. Much of this process of noticing and remembering may have been unconscious; it just happened naturally. Later, you may even recall a number of things and you may reflect on them. Through your reflection, you make assumptions, you hypothesize and make interpretations about the data you have collected. You have been naturally and unconsciously observing the children and intuitively using your knowledge and understanding about children's development and the curriculum to assess the growth and development of each child. All of this is important and valuable.

Kid watchers are teachers who interact with students and who monitor class activities in order to understand more about teaching and learning, mostly learning.

Goodman, 1989

Important and valuable though it is, this informal process needs to be complemented by observation that is more conscious, more focused, more articulated: a process of observing, recording, and reflecting that is more thorough and comprehensive.

Observation Process

When do teachers observe?

In the course of the normal day, teachers watch children as they participate with them. Teachers generally do not step out of action to observe. Observation is an ongoing and natural process that occurs in the midst of daily routines throughout the school year (Dichtelmiller, et al., 1994).

Teachers record observations of children in action and review them on a regular basis to discover patterns, assess progress, and make plans to continue their learning. Specific tasks are structured to develop a base of information about each child and chart their progress over time.

Observations may occur when children are:

- Working alone, with a partner, in groups, with adults, or with children of varying ages
- Participating in all kinds of activities, including art, drama, dance, music, movement, project work
- Exploring materials, toys, tools, equipment
- Completing specific tasks
- In transitions or during free time

What do teachers observe?

Observation needs to reflect process and product as teachers watch children:

- Reading
- Writing
- Computing
- Problem-solving
- Singing
- Working
- Graphing
- Miming
- Constructing
- Talking
- Making maps
- Classifying
- Transitioning
- Caring for classroom, equipment or person property
- Listening
- Sorting
- Playing music
- Signing
- Dramatizing
- Socializing
- Dancing
- Playing
- Building
- Drawing
- Painting
- Keyboarding
- Interacting
- Responding to others

Where do teachers observe?

Teachers watch children in every setting they are in:

- Classrooms
- Field trips
- Lunch room
- Hallways
- Gym
- Playground
- Restrooms
- Media Centers/Libraries

What do teachers learn about a child from observing?

- Development in goal areas
- Attitudes
- Ability to work as an individual or in a group
- Initiative
- Desire to learn
- Likes and dislikes
- Level of understanding
- How materials are used
- Prior knowledge
- Learning styles
- Learning needs, abilities, and interests
- Problem solving strategies
- Organizational skills
- Need for assistance

Strategies for Observing

- Observe and record regularly and consistently as part of the classroom routine; make it an integral part of the daily work plan.
- Observe the class in a holistic way to obtain a general sense of what is occurring. There may be children who require your immediate attention. Note what the child was doing that attracted your attention; note also your interaction with the child and the response to that exchange.
- Plan for focused observations of specific children. Decide what you wish to observe and what information you need to make appropriate plans for the child. (See Widely-Held Expectations section.)
- Explain to the children the purpose of the observation.
- Choose a variety of settings to make observations. Vary the times and include independent and group situations throughout the day.
- Record the behavior of the child at the time the observation is made as much as possible.
- Watch, listen, and record in ways that do not interfere with the child's learning.
- Check to ensure recorded observations are being collected for each child in the class.
- Note as many observations as you can. When in doubt about your perceptions of a child's development, make and record more observations or enlist the support of a resource teacher, librarian, or principal.
- Plan time to share observations with the children and listen to their observations about themselves. This should help the child know individual strengths, see growth, and know where to focus future effort.
- Observations should reflect both process and product.

What questions do I ask myself when I observe children?
The following questions are designed to help you focus on the child's development toward the goals of the Primary Program. The questions will help you assess, evaluate, and report on each child's progress.

Aesthetic and Artistic Development
Does the child:

- Demonstrate an interest in and enthusiasm for art, drama, and music?
- Demonstrate a willingness to participate in a variety of sensory experiences?
- Demonstrate an ability to imagine and visualize?
- Use materials appropriately?
- Use a variety of materials/media to explore/learn/represent what is known?
- Respond to performances (drama, plays, dance, musical performance, other children's work)?
- Demonstrate confidence in and acceptance of his or her own creations?

Emotional and Social Development
Does the child:

- Cooperate and collaborate?
- Demonstrate play (independent, parallel, cooperative, or organized)?
- Express and receive empathy?
- Accept responsibility?
- Make alternate choices when necessary?
- Cope with change?
- Choose appropriate peer models?
- Consider the feelings of others and interact appropriately?
- Deal appropriately with the emotions of others?
- Take emotional risks?
- Act on impulse?
- Cry easily?
- Show anger, use physical force, give in?

Intellectual Development
Does the child:

- Attend to the task at hand?
- Demonstrate curiosity and ask questions?
- Apply new information?
- Exhibit listening behaviors?
- Apply problem-solving strategies (define, gather, analyze, solve)?
- Use language to explore, learn, and represent knowledge and understanding?
- Use language to communicate effectively?
- Involve self in the processes of reading and writing?
- Represent knowledge in a variety of ways?
- Apply thinking skills, strategies, and processes?
- Demonstrate reflective thinking?
- Show joy in learning?

Physical Development and Well-Being
Does the child:

- Show interest in and participate in physical activity and movement?
- Show body and spatial awareness?
- Control physical movement (freely, hesitantly, awkwardly, age-appropriately)?
- Practice good nutritional habits?
- Demonstrate awareness of the importance of physical fitness?
- Work cooperatively and collaboratively in a physical activity setting?
- Handle toys, tools, implements, and equipment appropriately?
- Demonstrate an awareness of the need for safety in a variety of settings?
- Show care and respect for own and others' bodies?

Development of Responsibility
Does the child:

- Show sensitivity to other living things?
- Show a tolerance for differing opinions, feelings, and points of view?
- Accept differences in others (appearances, customs, and habits)?
- Appreciate cultural differences?
- Show pride in own heritage?
- Take appropriate action without adult reminders?
- Lead, cooperate, and follow as appropriate?
- Participate in decisions made by the group?
- Assume responsibility when given directions?
- Care for classroom equipment?
- Show flexibility when dealing with change?
- Appreciate and respect the environment?

Ways to Record Observations

1. Checklists

Checklists are useful in planning, monitoring, and shaping learning in the classroom. They provide a quick and easy way for gathering information about children's learning. When using checklists they should:

- Focus on children
- Relate to program goals
- Require a yes or no response, not degrees of certainty
- Focus on one item or aspect at a time
- Not be used as reporting devices

Example:

Math Checklist

Name_____

Begin to recognize "one" and "more than one"				
Count to nursery rhymes or the alphabet song				
May use simple quantity words such as "one more cookie" or "more milk"				
Recognize and count up to five				
≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈≈	≈	≈	≈	≈
Work with simple number facts showing different sums with many types of materials				
Begin to recognize that 10 is 10 or 20 is 20, no matter how objects are arranged in a group				

Developed from Mathematics Section Widely-Held Expectations.

2. Class List Logs

Class list logs are used when the teacher wishes "to record one or more short, specific pieces of information about each child present that day" (Nilsen, 1997). Every child needs to be observed in one class session. This might be a yes/no observation (can cut, or listens to the story).

Example:

Class List Log

Name	Can cut	Holds pencil appropriately	Cleans up space
Chelsie B.			
Adam D.			
Racheal D.			
Stephen E.			
Jackson F.			
Renna F.			
Latoya J.			
Connor L.			
Scott p.			
Leyton S.			
Chelsea T.			

3. Anecdotal Records

Anecdotal records contribute to overall assessment and evaluation when combined with other resources. They offer potentially the richest descriptions of children's behavior. They are a narrative account of many observations over a period of time and are a very factual recording method. Anecdotal records should be kept with these ideas in mind:

- Recount who, what, when and where—but not why.
- Write facts—what is actually observed with no interpretation.
- Record for all children.
- Record details in a specific or general area of a child's development.
- If quotes are used, quote the child exactly.

Possible ways of keeping anecdotal records include:

- Index cards in a file box
- Pages in a loose leaf binder indexed for each child
- At-a-glance sheets with one space for each child
- Post-it notes
- Address labels
- Computer software

(Nilsen, 1997)

Example:

> Maddie was able to gallop during music/movement activity. 10/9/99

4. Frequency Counts

Frequency counts measure the repeated actions of a child, whole group, or teacher. Observations are tallied. Examples of use could be keeping track of numbers of sharing incidents in a day or numbers of teacher interventions needed in a particular time period. Frequency counts are often used by teachers in changing their own strategies of interaction with the children. (Nilsen, p. 96)

Example:

Frequency Count

Encouraging		
Group members	Frequency	Examples
Raphael	///	High-five signal; "Uh huh"
Mahmoud	/	"Good idea"
Alain		
Zito	////	"Yeah"; nods

Source: Adapted from Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Holubec, E. J. (1988). Cooperation in the classroom, Revised Edition in P. C. Abrami, B. Chambers, C. Poulsen, C. DeSimone, S. D'Apollonia, & J. Howden, (1995). *Classroom connections: Understanding and using cooperative learning.* Toronto: Harcourt Brace.

5. Rating Scales

Rating scales are useful for tracking a child's development. They are created according to predetermined criteria and can be subjective. They give a range of criteria from which to choose rather than just a yes or no. Rating scales are good for assessing reading-writing-language progress and are quick and easy. Progress can be easily shared with parents (Nilsen, 1997).

Example:

Rating Scale for Plan-Do-Review

Not Yet	*With Assistance*	*Independent*	
1	3	5	Child is able to make a plan.
1	3	5	Child is able to follow plan.
1	3	5	Child shares materials.
1	3	5	Child interacts cooperatively with peers.
1	3	5	Child demonstrates responsibility in use of materials.
1	3	5	Child is able to review activities.

6. Time Samples

Time samples are used to describe behavior sequences in detail as they occur within a given time period. They help teachers discover a pattern or frequency of behavior, track children's choices, playmates, and what they spend time doing. The information can be used to draw conclusions about a child's activity and write in the portfolio about observations.

7. Media Records, Photographs, Audio Records, Video Records

A media record is a hard copy of what is actually observed in the classroom or the product created. It can be used as part of the child's portfolio. It might include audio or video tape collection or products completed on the computer.

Collecting Authentic Evidence Through Children's Products

Portfolios

Collecting what children produce provides a major source of evidence on which teachers assess and evaluate learning. Each drawing, painting, construction, map, or piece of writing a child creates is a representation of that child's knowledge and understanding of the world. Looking at samples of children's products reveals patterns of growth and change over time. These samples, complemented by the teacher's notes on observations of the processes used and records of conversations and conferences, are effective in demonstrating and guiding student progress.

The portfolio is a collection, sampling, and interpretation of a child's products, observations, and other activities. A portfolio provides documentation of a child's growth and development. It shows what a child can do and provides a baseline from which teachers can plan new learning for that child, while evaluating the overall program and its effectiveness.

Many kinds of data can be included in each child's portfolio. Inviting children to share in deciding what is included in the portfolio is important; *it helps children make increasingly critical choices about their work and helps them learn the process of self-evaluation.*

The portfolio is also a rich source of information for sharing with parents. At parent conferences, teachers can invite children to talk about their representations and products, showing their development. The portfolio illustrates specifically, concretely, and graphically all the things a child is doing in school. Parents get an overview of a child's learning, reinforcing learning as a collaborative process and reinforcing the idea of continuous learning, as a child's development is described and related to previous learning.

Portfolios help parents:

- Appreciate what their child can do and is attempting to do
- Look for growth over time
- Talk to the child and teacher about the collection
- Use the Widely-Held Expectations to help understand the child's progress

Steps in Setting up a Portfolio System

1. Read and become familiar with Widely-Held Expectations and state/district standards.
2. Decide how to collect the materials and label with children's names.
    - Boxes
    - Scrapbooks
    - Photo albums
    - Binders
    - Audio and video tapes
    - Computer disks
3. Determine what learning will be measured (language, math, science, social-emotional, physical, social studies, artistic-aesthetic).
4. Set up the organization system for documentation.
5. Decide on an observation plan—what, when, and how you will observe.
6. Consider how you will involve the child in assessment.

Collecting Children's Products

Hard copy examples:

Stories
Illustrations
Reading log
Writing a word problem
Lists
Reports
Story maps
Calculating
Collecting data
Charts
Models
Paintings
Posters
Photos of projects
Audio and video tapes of presentations
Poetry
Journal entries
Letters
Letter to author
Computer skills
Graphs
Displays
Research

Rubrics

A rubric is a set of rules with specific scoring guidelines that describe qualitatively different levels of student performance and allow the assignment of ratings or scores.

In developing rubrics the following points should be considered:

1. Brainstorm words that describe the highest and lowest levels of student performance for the activity or project.
2. Select 2 to 3 key words (for each level) from the list generated in step one.
3. Describe intermediate levels of performance.
4. Look at actual samples of student performance and review/revise levels generated in steps one and two.
5. Ask another teacher to rate a sample of student performances using the rubric and look for areas of disagreement. Discuss disagreements.
6. Review and revise rubric based on discussion of disagreements.

See Assessment Appendix for sample rubrics.

Collecting Authentic Evidence through Conversations and Conferences

…with children

The social nature of learning is supported as teachers talk with children and plan activities where children talk with one another. Talking about what they have done and are attempting to do is necessary if children are to learn the skills of self-evaluation. The teacher's job is to respond and help others learn to respond constructively so ideas and projects can be shared with the goal of improving learning. It is through this process children learn to value what they do. The affirmation gained through such interaction helps develop the confidence essential for setting personal goals.

Children reveal what they think and know through their talk. Of course, a child's learning will precede his or her ability to talk about it; a child may know a concept but not be able to explain it or be proficient at doing something but not be able to talk about it.

Assessment and teaching should go hand-in-hand in the classroom, with each informing the other. Assessment for instruction therefore should be continuous. Furthermore, in order for assessment and teaching to work together, each should resemble the other. To know whether or not a young child learned from a particular classroom activity, teachers use an assessment procedure that resembles or is an integral part of the activity itself.

Teale, 1988

Nevertheless, conversation, dialogue, and conferences between teacher and child provide the teacher with a wealth of information about the child and his or her learning. This ongoing dialogue helps the teacher teach by helping the child clarify, extend, and enhance thinking and learning.

Talking and listening to children offer new insights into their learning. The best way to find out about a child's thinking is to ask the child. This talk is essential for parents and teachers as they plan for the individual needs of each child at home and at school.

When talking with and listening to children in school, teachers use the information to:

- Help clarify thinking
- Assist children in thinking about their own learning
- Help achieve new levels of understanding
- Facilitate self-evaluation
- Make children feel their ideas and opinions are valued
- Help children appreciate progress and set future goals
- Build positive teacher-child relationships
- Lead children to become self-directed learners
- Foster social development of interaction between peers and adults

Conversations with children need to be part of everyday activities in the home and classroom. Conversations enhance learning in two ways. They let the listener in on someone else's thinking and provide the opportunity to compare and confirm perceptions. As well, they allow the speaker to refine and clarify thinking by putting thoughts into words.

Conferences may take a variety of formats. Each has its particular uses and advantages. Examples include:

Interviews—Children reveal what they think and know through their talk. A child's learning will precede his or her ability to talk about it. Through dialogue the child clarifies, extends, and enhances thinking and learning, appreciating their progress and setting future goals as they work toward self-evaluation.

> *Individual, paired, and small group conferences* with the teacher helping to develop the concepts of cooperative and collaborative planning and learning.
>
> *Peer conferencing* where students work together on a task.
>
> *Negotiated Evaluation* which involves children, parents and all others concerned with the child's progress. The outcome of this type of conference is that everyone shares a collection of information. This increases the likelihood that more informed judgments and decisions will be made and put into action (Woodward, 1994).
>
> *Predictable conferencing* helps children to organize themselves and keep sight of their goals. As children anticipate their conference with the teacher, they begin to think more about their work and what they may say or do during the conference. This promotes self-assessment, which is meaningful and real to the child.
>
> *Roving Conferences* are those done while the teacher is walkng around observing the children and should be practiced in addition to predictable conferences. The teacher should be able to collaborate with any one student or group when the teachable moments arise (Graves, 1983).

Performance Tasks—They show the stages of thinking and are especially good for assessing math and science skills. The teacher presents tasks and observes how the child performs them. Performance tasks are done at selected times with selected children. The teacher will draw conclusions about the child's development and make curriculum decisions accordingly (Nilsen, 1997).

Examples of products for assessment through conversations and conferences include:

- Demonstrations
- Solving problems
- Storytelling
- Oral reading
- Counting
- One-to-one matching
- Descriptions
- Reading charts and graphs
- Making and describing models

You may find it useful to keep conference logs in which, following a conference, you record highlights, special notes, and reminders for the next conference (see the appendix in this section).

…with parents

Talking and listening to parents offers insights into their child's learning. Parents are familiar with their child's interests, dispositions, and special talents. Information may be collected from parents through:

- Informal conversations
- Formal conferences
- Interviews and surveys
- Parent observations of their child at home
- Parent selection of work samples from home which may become part of the child's portfolio.

Parents should be invited to become partners in their child's education. This means that teachers and parents do an equal share of listening and talking. Consider sending a survey home to the parents to gain information about the child and parental expectations and perceptions.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We believe that parents should be partners in their child's education. Your perceptions are valuable and useful to us in planning the best learning program for your child. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions.

What are your hopes for your child as he or she begins school?_____
_____

Do you have any concerns abut your child's development? _____
_____

What are your child's interests? How does he or she spend time at home? _____
_____

What are your child's special talents?_____
_____

What do you enjoy most about your child?_____
_____

Are there behaviors which we can work on together?_____
_____

In what ways can school personnel support your family (introducing new families, providing names for car pools, baby-sitting, contacting appropriate family service organizations)? _____
_____

Thank you for your help in getting to know your child as a learner and as a member of our classroom.

Please return to:

Technology to Assist with Record-Keeping and Planning

The computer is an effective tool for planning assessment and evaluation and for record keeping at the primary level. Take care to select flexible and appropriate software. The ideal software can be used not only to store information but also to call up and review that information on the basis of the goals, and learning descriptors of the Primary Program. This makes it easier for teachers to track progress and to create summaries of learning for individual children and for the whole class. This, in turn, helps teachers to plan and report.

A good software program:

- Features easy ways to enter and view information from anywhere within the program
- Can record both demographic and learning development information for each student
- Can record and display anecdotal information
- Allows students to enter certain types of information on their own
- Automatically dates each entry
- Provides prompts for input about children who have not had comments recorded for a certain time period
- Contains appropriate security features

To allow the most effective use of information about children, software should be able to:

- Organize information in a variety of ways
- Help with reporting

Software that can reorganize student information in ways that are meaningful to you will provide a valuable saving of time. Software that stores great quantities of text but does not provide much organization tends to increase teacher time spent reading and rereading to find appropriate information.

Ideally, a system should be able to provide a concise, possibly visual or symbolic representation or summary of the information desired. From the summary, you should be able to refer back to the complete set of information.

Communicating Children's Progress

One of the fundamental purposes of assessment and evaluation is to provide meaningful information about the child. Families are traditionally the audience we envision when we talk about communication. The strategies teachers develop to enhance communication can be adapted to a broader spectrum to inform children, families, counselors, community health personnel, special area teachers, paraeducators, district personnel and community members.

Communication is a shared partnership between the teacher and family. The purpose of all communication with families is to be as informative as possible and to support a child's continued success in school. It is meaningful to report the child's progress in terms of actual classroom events and occurrences. When the teacher uses authentic examples of the child's activities in the classroom, the teacher demonstrates to the parents that he or she knows the child as well as the curriculum.

In dialoguing with families, as well as in writing progress report comments, the teacher describes the child's development as it relates to the goals of the primary program (aesthetic and artistic, emotional and social, physical, intellectual, and development of responsibility), state and district standards and benchmarks, and/or curriculum frameworks. Comments express what the child can do, the child's interest and attitudes, the child's learning needs, the teacher's plan to support the child, and how families can assist their child's learning.

The teacher facilitates and enhances communication with families by collaboratively developing goals and expectations at the start of the year. Throughout the year the child's progress is communicated both informally and formally.

Informal Methods
Dialogue
Newsletters
Anecdotal notes
Sending home samples of child's work
Sharing children's self-evaluations
Home visits by the teacher
Classroom visits by the parents
Video of classroom activities
Inviting families to learning celebrations
Electronic messages
Website for updates & homework information

Formal Methods
Progress reports
Conferences
Portfolios/Electronic portfolios
Systematic observation

The examples of communicating a child's progress in this section are suggestions. They are not meant to be prescriptive or limiting. Rather, they provide starting points or ideas for teachers to use, refine, or adapt. As teachers use opportunities to communicate information about children's progress, they will develop methods that best suit their own style and situation.

Written Progress Reports

One of the formal methods to report progress to parents is through a written progress report, often referred to as the report card. School districts typically adopt a consistent form, grading procedures, and style for writing these progress reports. Important areas to consider when developing a district progress report are:

- Do the areas being reported reflect the curriculum standards and benchmarks that are being taught and demonstrate the child's learning in the classroom rather than topics of study from purchased curriculum texts?
- Is the progress report inclusive of the whole child (all the goal areas of the Primary Program) rather than focused on academic areas only?
- Does the progress report support a child's ongoing development (emerging, consistent, independent) rather than comparing the child to other children in the class and using grading methods that are inappropriate (letter grades, percentages)?
- Does the progress report allow the teacher to describe the child's progress with support from actual classroom events and observations rather than report on what the child can't do?

Just as there are multiple ways to collect evidence of children's learning (documenting observational data, collecting products in a portfolio, and conferencing with a child about their thinking during an activity) there are also multiple formats that a progress report can include to communicate a child's learning to parents. Documentation may be summarized in a continuous progress map, through a rating scale or in a narrative format. No matter what format is chosen, the teacher will need to establish a process for preparing the progress report, the actual writing, and then reflecting on the report. Considerations related to this are summarized below.

Pre-writing

Prior to writing the report, think about the following:

- Review data collected that shows evidence of the child's learning (observational notes, products in the portfolio) and ensure that a variety of representations support all goal areas.
- After reviewing the evidence think about your key impressions on the child's progress in relation to the Widely-Held Expectations/district standards and benchmarks.
- Review goals set with the child the previous term, and talk with the child about his/her learning.
- Set up meeting times, if needed, with other school and district personnel to discuss relevant issues regarding individual children.

Writing the Report

Some things to keep in mind while writing the progress report are:

- Describe the child's progress in relation to state and district standards and benchmarks and use actual classroom learning experiences to clarify and illustrate what you mean.
- Look for patterns in the evidence you have collected to help you summarize the child's strengths and areas needing support.
- When indicating learning needs, state what strategies you plan to use to help the child. Offer suggestions for parents to use at home.
- Use language that parents can understand, and write comments that are informative and respectful of both the child and parent.
- Include samples of a child's self-evaluation.

Reflecting on the Written Report

After writing a report reflect on the content by asking the following questions:

- Does this report support the learner to improve?
- Is the tone positive?
- Does the report reflect the child's progress and capture his uniqueness?
- Does the report convey to the parents that I know their child as well as I know the curriculum.
- Does the report tell what the child can do, state the child's learning needs, and offer future plans to support the child's learning?

Reporting Progress to Parents
Questions to Ask

- What is the student able to do?
- What areas require further attention or development?
- In what ways can the child's learning be supported?
- How is the child progressing in relation to development expectations for children in a similar age range or in relation to grade level standards & benchmarks?

Examples of Progress Reports

Narrative Progress Report

The narrative progress report profiles the child's strength and learning needs in a descriptive format. It is a product of thoughtful reflection based on documentation of a child's learning from multiple sources over time.

Primary Report Card Sample

Stuart, age 7 year, 11 months, second formal report.

This report was sent home during the second formal reporting period following a student-led conference with parents. Stuart shared his portfolio, demonstrated his mathematical understanding, read a passage from a book, and presented a piece of his writing at the conference.

Summary of Report

This report:

- Describes growth in social development
- Comments on his gains in language arts, writing, and mathematics, as well as his participation in science and physical activities.
- Comments on the student's progress related to expectations for his age range.
- Identifies areas that need attention and will be supported.
- Identifies ways in which the parents can help.

What Stuart is able to do

Stuart

- Works well with others
- Is comfortable expressing his opinions, sharing ideas, and offering information during discussion times
- Listens carefully to his classmates
- Enjoys and participates in a wide variety of classroom activities

Stuart has made significant gains this term. Specifically, he

- Is using phonics, pictures, and context clues to read unknown words
- No longer needs to rely on books that have repetitious lines
- Reads more fluently and confidently
- Has improved in writing. He is now able to write longer and more interesting passages. Stuart is using phonetic spelling in his writing. His stories now have a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Has very strong mathematical skills. Stuart can add and subtract rapidly to 20. He knows many number facts from memory. He can recognize patterns in numbers and is able to county by twos, fives, and tens accurately.
- Uses the science box equipment (see the attached curriculum letter) in many interesting ways. He especially likes to use the magnifying glass and thermometers during water experiments.
- Participates very well during our physical education classes, and has shown that he is able to catch and throw a ball well. Ask him to demonstrate these skills at home.

Areas that require further attention or development

As we discussed, he is not yet reading materials as independently as one would expect for children in his age range (7–9). In the next term, I will

- Continue to offer him learning assistance in reading
- Work on the correct formation of letters (he continues to reverse some letters). One of his goals for next term is to focus on the correct formation of the letters *b, p, s, q, d,* and *m* which he often writes as *w*.
- Stuart will be further challenged to work on adding and subtracting number facts to 50.

Ways to support Stuart at home

You might have him do activities at home that involve:

- Getting Stuart to select a passage or a book to read to you.
- Reading to him to support development in reading.
- Writing for a purpose (e.g., writing grocery lists, thank-you cards, birthday cards, reminders to anyone in the family).

From: Ministry of Education, Victoria, British Columbia.

Continuous Progress Maps/Developmental Continuum

A progress map or developmental continuum describes the nature of development in an area of learning and provides a frame of reference for monitoring individual growth. The intention is for the teacher to focus attention narrowly on one area of development and use the progress map for monitoring individual achievement through that area of learning. Additional maps can be used to look at a child's progress in other areas.

An essential component of a progress map or developmental continuum is that it describes developing competence in words and examples. The map tells the knowledge, skills and understandings of a learning area in the sequence in which they typically develop and provides examples of the kinds of performances and student work typically observed at particular levels of attainment.

Spelling and Writing Scale, Grades K–3

Early Emergent → **Independence**

Spelling and Writing Competencies			
Kindergarten	**First Grade**	**Second Grade**	**Third Grade**
☐ Represents spoken language with temporary and/or conventional spelling. ☐ Demonstrates understanding of literary language (e.g., "once upon a time," variety of sentence patterns). ☐ Writes most letters of the alphabet. ☐ Writes and/or participates in writing behaviors.	☐ Writes all upper and lower case letters of alphabet. ☐ Uses phonics knowledge and basic patterns (e.g., an, ee, ake) to spell correctly three- and four-letter words. ☐ Applies phonics to write independently, using temporary and/or conventional spelling. ☐ Uses basic punctuation and basic capitalization. ☐ Composes a variety of products (e.g., stories, journal entries, letters).	☐ Correctly spells, using previously studied words and spelling patterns in one's own writing. ☐ Represents with appropriate letters all the sounds of a word when writing. ☐ Begins to use formal language and/or literary language in place of oral language patterns, as appropriate. ☐ Plans and makes judgments about what to include in written products. ☐ With guided discussion, revises to clarify and refine writing. ☐ Given help with organization, writes structured, informative presentations and narratives. ☐ Attends to spelling, mechanics, and format for final products in one's own writing.	☐ Demonstrates and uses prewriting strategies (drawing, brainstorming, webbing, or story-boarding. ☐ Revises by adding and/or deleting for elaboration/ clarification. ☐ Self-assesses own writing. ☐ Uses paragraphs to organize information. ☐ Uses concepts of order and time. ☐ Uses vocabulary, ideas, themes, and language structure from books in own writing. ☐ Writes a variety of literary, informational, and practical texts (fairy tale, poetry, recipes, news article, interviews). ☐ Writes to support ideas with reference to evidence presented in text. ☐ Demonstrates voice, sense of audience, purpose.

(North Carolina Department of Education, 1999)

Conferences

Throughout the school year there will be opportunities to hold conferences to discuss the child's progress. The purpose of such meetings is to exchange information in order to develop a better understanding of what the child can do, his or her learning needs, and plans for supporting the child.

Conferences have traditionally been held between the teacher and the parent(s); teachers, support staff and/or administrators have been included as necessary. Including the child in conferences helps to focus attention on the child in relation to the goals and the curriculum, rather than allowing curriculum issues to dominate. The following samples may be useful to teachers in planning for parent-teacher, and/or three-way (parent, student, teacher) or student-led conferences.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent participation in conferences is enhanced when the initial communication is well-planned and carried out in a non-threatening manner. A successful conference includes: building rapport, obtaining information, providing information, and concluding strategies.

Building Rapport

- Welcome parents
- Establish a comfortable relationship
- Try to put everyone at ease
- Use reflection statements to encourage honest dialogue

Obtaining Information

- Ask parents to contribute information
- Use open-ended questions
- Listen, ask for clarification, pose questions
- Avoid negative, emotionally laden questions
- Avoid yes or no answers
- Obtain information before providing it
- If you take notes, let parents know you are taking notes so that you will be able to follow up on key points and offer them the opportunity to see the notes

Providing Information

- Offer suggestions for assisting the child with his or her learning
- Acknowledge parents' concerns and then respond to their statements
- Reassure parents that help is being provided if needed
- Collaborate to decide who will be responsible for what actions (what will the teacher do, what will the parent do, and what will the child do?)

Concluding Strategies

- Summarize major points
- Mention any unresolved issues needing further action and/or discussion

Parents are typically eager to gain information regarding their child's performance. Teachers should provide accurate and relevant information in a sensitive manner. The following are some recommendations for informing parents about children's school progress:

- Organize information into broad categories
- Begin with positive information
- Be careful not to overwhelm parents with too much detailed information
- Avoid using educational jargon
- Let the parent(s) know that you appreciate and value their child
- Cite specific examples about the child
- Encourage parents to discuss and clarify as needed
- Have available dated examples of the child's products
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say so
- End on a positive note, summarizing the plan you, the parent, and the child have agreed upon

Three-Way or Student-Led Conferences

(Child-Parent-Teacher)

Whenever possible students should be included in the process of evaluating and reporting their progress to the parents and teacher in three-way or student-led conference. In this conference, the student takes an active role preparing for leading and reflecting on the conference after it has taken place (Anthony, Johnson, Mickelson, & Preece, pg. 1989). Inform parents about this type of reporting approach early in the school year by scheduling a parent information session to explain the rationale and what is involved in student-led conferences.

In preparing for the conference, students spend time self-assessing their progress and setting goals for future learning. These lifelong learning skills are an important part of the student's education.

With young children, self-assessing and goal setting can be reinforced or guided by the teacher. The teacher may use guided reflection questions to assist students in focusing on certain aspects of their work samples. For example, a kindergarten or first grade teacher may ask the students to find samples of work that show change in their writing (Guskey, 1996).

During the conference, the child leads the dialogue and shares with the parents the progress he/she has demonstrated over the reporting period. The teacher's role is to be a support system for the child and to offer encouragement as appropriate. The teacher can focus upon progress the child has made in relation to the district or state standards and benchmarks instead of making comparisons to peers' accomplishments.

When the conference has finished, the child can ask the parents to write or comment on the information that was provided during the conference. Parents are invited to sign a classroom guest book before they leave. The purpose of the guest book is to provide the teacher with a record of parental attendance and feedback on the student-led reporting approach. At the end of the conference, parents can request a further conference with the teacher if they desire.

In the days following the conference, the students and teacher should hold conversations about their perceptions of the conference. This is an opportunity for the students and the teacher to reflect on the experience and identify any concerns. Student-led conferences give the student an active and meaningful part in assessing and reporting their own learning. This in turn leads to enhanced self-respect and self-esteem as they identify their strengths and the areas they are trying to improve upon with their parents. Additional before, during, and after conference activities may facilitate the teacher in making plans for the student-led conference. The suggestions that follow are possibilities.

Parent Follow-up to Three-Way Conference

1. Did you feel comfortable having your child involved in the conference?	Yes	No
2. Were all your concerns addressed?	Yes	No
3. If an action plan was developed, do you feel it was realistic?	Yes	No
4. Do you feel the time was well spent?	Yes	No
5. Did your child enjoy being part of the conference?	Yes	No
6. Any other comments?	Yes	No

Three Way or Student-Led Conferences

Pre-Conference Activities

The Child

- Looks through his/her portfolio to see which products he/she wishes to share
- Decorates own portfolio
- Writes an invitation to parents
- Prepares a self-report (younger children can use drawing and phonetic spelling

The Whole Class

- Discuss preparation for parents' visits (classroom changes, bulletin boards)
- Discuss conference process
- Develop procedures for the conference process (taking coats, introducing parents)
- Role play the conference (rehearse with a peer or teacher)
- May prepare refreshments for parents

The Teacher

- Guides students in self-assessing their portfolio work samples using reflective questions
- Reviews each child's portfolio and progress relating to standards and benchmarks
- Schedules appointments with families
- Prepares a video or slide show about the classroom (for viewing while parents are waiting)

Three Way or Student-Led Conferences

During the Conference

The Child

- Greets and introduces parents and teachers
- Takes parents on tour of classroom
- Shows parents portfolio and products
- Discusses and sets learning goals

The Parents

- Participate in conference
- Acknowledge child's efforts and accomplishments
- Provide information

The Teacher

- Welcomes parents
- Encourages child to take leadership role
- Draws attention to signs of progress over time
- Points out the significance of the learning
- Facilitates setting of learning goals
- Acknowledges that education occurs at home
- Invites parents to interact throughout the year

After the Conference

The Child

- Fills out a conference evaluation
- Write parents a thank you note for attending conference

Whole Class

- Discusses conference process and make suggestions for another time

The Parents

- Fill out a conference evaluation
- Write a note or make comments to their child about the conference

The Teacher

- Records pertinent information
- Creates a new action plan
- Reads parents and child conference evaluations

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Assessment and Evaluation Appendix

Glossary

Rubrics

Sample Classroom Forms

Sample Parent Forms

Assessment Plans and Activities:
A Teacher's Self-Evaluation

Am I focusing on the learner and the learning (rather than on what has been learned)?

- Are my assessment practices helping me to be a "better" teacher—to work more effectively in enhancing student's development (rather than satisfying external, system-monitoring requirements)?
- Are my assessment activities meaningful to the students and contextualized within my classroom community (rather than trivial, artificial tasks)?
- Does what I am doing make sense to students, parents, and to me (rather than involving mysterious rituals and results that only experts can interpret)?
- Is assessment a dynamic, integral part of all classroom activities (rather than something that happens at the "end" when the learning is over)?
- Is assessment a shared collaborative activity in a community of discovery (rather than the sole right and responsibility of the teacher)?

From S. Jeroski, *Learner-focused Assessment: Helping Students Grow,* 1992.

Assessment Glossary

Alternative assessment—Any assessment other than traditional, selected-response (multiple-choice, true-false, and matching) tests. Includes performance assessment, personal communication, and assessment of dispositions such as students' attitudes toward learning and beliefs about themselves as learners.

Anecdotal records—A narrative account that records details in a specific or general area of a child's development through repeated observations over a period of time that recounts who, what, when, and where, *but not why*.

Assessment—The process of gathering information (both quantitative and qualitative) for systematic evaluation. In education, assessment covers a range of processes used to determine or estimate what students know and can do and how much they have learned. Assessment can include tests, student learning demonstrations, teacher observations, professional judgments, and other indicators such as graduation rates and surveys.

Authentic assessment—An assessment that engages students in applying knowledge and skills in ways that are used outside of the school setting. The student not only completes or demonstrates the desired behavior/skill/process, but does so within a real-life context. *This term is not synonymous with alternative assessment. An alternative assessment may or may not be authentic.*

Benchmark—Standards for judging performance or the characterization of developmental/educational milestones, such as what students should typically be able to do by the end of a certain grade.

Checklist—A scoring system that focuses on the presence or absence of a behavior or characteristic.

Criterion-referenced tests—Standardized tests that compare a student's performance to clearly identified learning tasks or skills levels. The basis for comparison is to a body of content knowledge and skills.

Developmental assessment—Measurement of a child's cognitive, knowledge, language, and psychomotor skills in order to evaluate development in comparison to children of the same chronological age.

Diagnostic assessment—An assessment that helps identify a child's strengths, weaknesses, successes, and needs so a teacher can make appropriate instructional decisions. Knowing and understanding where your children are coming from helps to plan where they are going.

Evaluation—The process of determining the merit, worth, or value of something, or the product of that process. Synonyms or partial-synonyms for this term include; appraise, analyze, critique, grade, judge, rate, rank or review.

Frequency counts—A tallied observation of the repeated actions of a child, whole group, or teacher.

Formal assessment—A systematic and structured means of collecting information on student performance that both teachers and students recognize as an assessment event.

High-stakes assessment—Assessments that carry serious consequences for students or for educators. The outcomes determine such important things as promotion to the next grade, graduation, merit pay for teachers, or school rankings reported in the newspaper.

Informal assessment—A means of collecting information about student performance in naturally occurring circumstances which may not produce highly accurate and systematic results but can provide useful insights about a child's learning.

Large-scale assessment—Standardized tests and other forms of assessment designed to be administered to large groups of individuals under prescribed conditions to provide information about performance on a standardized scale so that results for districts, states, or nations can be fairly compared.

Norms—Statistics or data that summarize the test performance of specified groups such as test-takers of various ages or grades.

Norm-referenced tests—Standardized tests that compare a student's performance to that of other test-takers. Norms are obtained by administering the test (under the same conditions) to a given sample (drawn from the population of interest, called the norm group) and then calculating means (or medians), standard deviations, percentile ranks, and other standard scores.

Observation—A systematic way to collect data by watching or listening to children during an activity.

Performance assessment—Assessment that encompasses many of the characteristics of both authentic and alternative assessment. These tasks ask students to performs, create, produce, or do something. These assessments may tap process, product or both.

Performance indicator—A comprehensive description of the overt behavior (observable performances) that indicate the presence of specific knowledge and/or skills. A performance indicators allows for assessment of attainment.

Portfolio—A way of collecting information for one or more of the following uses: (1) to showcase students work, (2) to describe student performance, or (3) to evaluate student performance. The term portfolio can refer to both the process associated with collecting information and the product itself, the collection. The key characteristics of effective portfolio systems are: (1) authenticity of instructional activities and assessments, (2) on-going assessment that is aligned with curriculum and instruction, (3) inclusion of assessments that focus on process as well as product, (4) assessment results used to document growth, (5) multidimensional, (6) collaboration between student and teacher, (7) parental involvement, and (8) student self-reflection and evaluation. A portfolio assessment is the process of evaluating student achievement based on portfolios.

Rating scale—A scoring system that identifies the frequency with which a behavior occurs (for example—always, usually, seldom).

Readiness test—A test used to evaluate a student's preparedness for a specific academic program. The test will identify current skill achievement and performance, not developmental potential.

Reliability—The degree to which a test or assessment measures consistently across different instances of measurement-for example, whether results are consistent across raters, times of measurement, or sets of test items.

Rubric—A set of specific scoring guidelines or rules that describe *qualitatively* different levels of student performance and allow the assignment of ratings or scores.

Scale—The demarcated continuum for judging performance. The range of numbers or levels within which we judge student work. Relative to rubrics, scale refers to the number of levels or performances that are defined.

Scoring—The purpose of scoring is to capture the essence of what a student knows or is able to do and to provide enough description to allow sound instructional decisions.

Screening—Selecting individuals on a preliminary test who are in need of more thorough evaluation.

Screening test—A test used as a first step in identifying children who may be in need of special services. If a potential problem is suggested by the results of a screening test, then a child should be referred for a more complete assessment and diagnosis.

Standard—The specific performance/product/achievement that sets the criteria for performance on the task in question.

Standard-led assessment (standards-based assessment)—Standard-led assessments are designed to measure clearly specified educational standards (student achievement targets) and therefore are closely linked to curriculum, relying upon a tight coupling between what is taught and what is tested.

Standardized tests—Tests that are administered and scored under conditions uniform to all students (test-takers). Standardization is a generic concept that can apply to any testing method-from multiple-choice to written essays to performance assessments. Standardization makes scores comparable and assures, to the extent possible, that test-takers have equal chances to demonstrate what they know.

Tasks/Items—These terms are generally used interchangeably. Traditionally, the term *items* has been used in conjunction with paper-and-pencil assessment, whereas the term *tasks* has been associated with performance assessment.

Test—A formal procedure for eliciting responses so as to measure the performance and capabilities of a student or group.

Validity—The accuracy of a test or assessment in measuring what it was intended to measure. Validity is determined by the extent to which interpretations and decisions based on test scores are warranted and supported by independent evidence.

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Rubrics

How to be a Jackpot Reader!!! Name:_____

	Jackpot!!!	Almost to the Jackpot	Working to the Jackpot
Voice	▪ You read so everyone could hear. ▪ You read slowly so your audience could understand. ▪ You read with good expression and the audience enjoyed listening to you read.	▪ You had to be reminded to read louder and then you did. ▪ You had to be reminded to read more slowly and then you did. ▪ You are beginning to read with expression and need a little more practice.	▪ You read too quietly to be heard. You need to read louder. ▪ The audience could not understand your words because you read too fast. You need to read more slowly. ▪ You need more practice reading with expression.
Body	▪ You held the book away from your face. ▪ You showed the pictures slowly.	▪ There were a few times when you held the book too closely. You need to hold the book away from your face so your audience can hear you. ▪ You had to be reminded to show the pictures more slowly and then you did.	▪ You held the book too closely the whole time you were reading. You need to hold it away from your face so the audience can hear you. ▪ You didn't show the pictures or you need to remember to show the pictures more slowly.
Practice	▪ You knew all of the words or just got stuck on 1 or 2 words in the book. ▪ It sounded like you had practiced the book with an adult because you knew you to say the words and you knew what they meant. You read without starting and stopping.	▪ You got stuck on more than 2 words in the book and needed a little help. ▪ It sounded like you needed to practice with an adult because you didn't know how to say some of the words and/or you didn't know what they meant. You had to stop and start several times.	▪ You got stuck on lots of words in the book and needed a lot of help. The audience had a hard time staying interested. ▪ It sounded like you did not practice enough or not at all because you had to stop and start many times. The audience had a hard time staying interested. You need more practice.

Source: K. Routh, Norwalk Community School District, Norwalk, IA.

Writing…How Am I doing?

Name_____
Date_____ Title_____

Ready to publish!!!!	**Writing in progress!!**	**Oops!! Still need to…**
I made a plan and am using it to help me with my new piece of writing.	I am making a plan for my new piece of writing.	I didn't make a plan/I lost my plan. I need to make a plan.
Each sentence is about the piece. My audience can understand my writing.	So far, each sentence is about the piece.	Some of my sentences don't have anything to do with the story. I need to change them.
I circled all of the words that I thought were not spelled correctly and I tried to look them up.	I have circled all of the words so far, that I think are not spelled correctly.	I need to go back and circle all of the words that I think are not spelled correctly.
I remembered to use capital letters: at the beginning of each sentence, for names of people, places, months, holidays and days of the week.	So far, I have remembered to use capital letters: at the beginning of each sentence, for names of people, places, months, holidays and days of the week.	I need to go back and put in some capital letters: at the beginning of sentences, names of people, places, months, holidays and days of the week.
I remembered to use small letters on all words that don't need a capital letter.	So far, I have remembered to use small letters on all words that don't need a capital letter.	I need to go back and check to see where I should use small letters instead of capital letters.
My audience can read my writing easily because I used good spacing and neat handwriting.	So far, my handwriting is easy to read because I used good spacing and neat handwriting.	I need to use neat handwriting and good spacing so my audience will be able to read it.
My sentences are easy to read because I remembered to put in periods, exclamation points or question marks to show where they end.	So far, my sentences are easy to read because I remembered to put in periods, exclamation points or question marks to show where they end.	My audience is having a hard time telling where my sentences begin and end. I need to put in periods, exclamation points or question marks where they belong.

Source: K. Routh, Norwalk Community School District, Norwalk, IA.

Writing… How Am I Doing?

Name_____
Date Started _____ Title_____

Ready to Publish!!!	**Still Working**	**Oops!! Still need to…**	**Comments:**
I made a plan and I am using it to help me write my new piece.	I am still working on a plan for my new piece of writing.	I didn't make a plan/I lost my plan. I need to make a plan.	
Each sentence makes sense and is about my writing. My audience can understand what I have written.	So far each sentence makes sense and is about my writing. My audience can understand what I have written.	Some of what I have written doesn't make sense. I need to go back and make it better so my audience will understand what I have written.	
Mrs. Routh and I have talked about all of the things I needed to fix and I did.	Mrs. Routh and I have talked about the things I need to change and I need to go back and fix them.	Mrs. Routh and I have not talked about what needs to be fixed in my writing.	
My book has been typed and I have illustrated it.	My book has been typed and I am working on the illustrations.	I am waiting for Mrs. Routh to type my story.	

Source: K. Routh, Norwalk Community School District, Norwalk, IA.

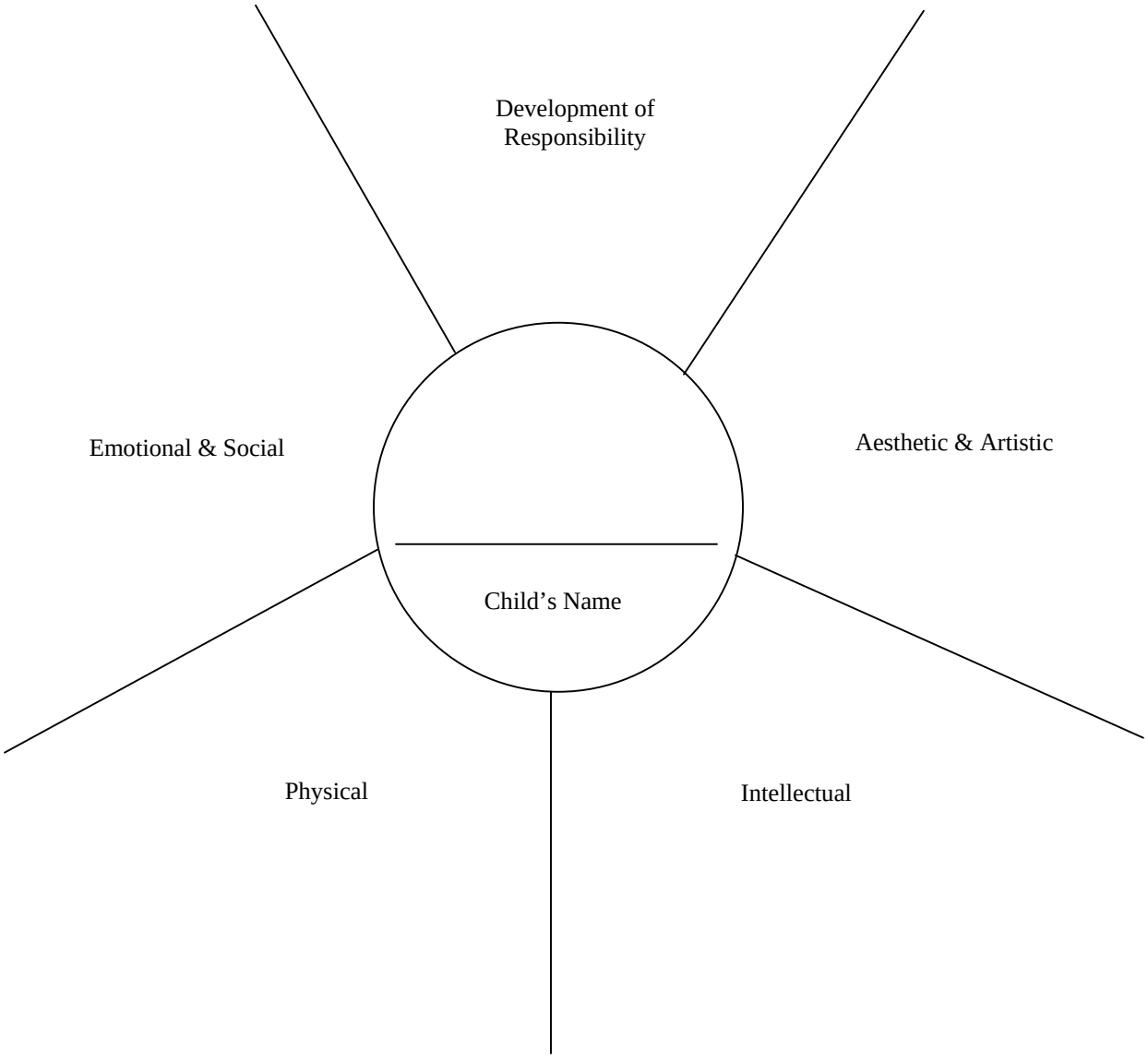
Rubrics for Projects—Explanation of how projects will be evaluated

	Limited	Satisfactory	Commendable
Writing	Less than 3 questions answered	Three-five questions answered—who, what, when, where, why, who, how	More than 5 questions answered WELL
	Squished, off lines, messy, missing capitals, missing punctuation	Neat, capitals, punctuation	Best writing, interesting, details, paragraphs, quotation marks
Product	Sloppy, few colors, scribbly, not big	Neat, colorful	Elaborate, details, creative
	Just a little information, drawn only	Good information, shows what you learned	More elaboration, more color, more information, more creativity
Presentation	Soft, fast, paper in front of face	Strong, good words, good speed	Heard easily, interesting voice, explain well
	Taking product away	Tell enough to be interesting	Main parts well organized

Source: Mrs. Barb Evans, Grade Two-Rousseau Elementary School, Lincoln, NE. January, 1995.

Sample forms

Notes on_____in All Goals



Date: _____

Self Evaluation

Name _____
Date _____

1. Today in _____ I worked on _____

   _____

   _____

2. I learned _____

   _____

3. I felt good when I _____

   _____

   _____

4. I would like some help with _____

   _____

   _____

5. Next time in _____ I plan to _____

   _____

   _____

Product Samples

Dear Parent(s):

The following is enclosed for you to look at and discuss with your child. _____

_____

_____

_____

Please notice that _____

_____

_____

_____

_____ If particularly pleased with _____

_____

Your comments are welcome: _____

_____

_____

_____ _____

Parent's signature Teacher's signature

Please be sure to sign this form and return it with the material in the envelope provided.

Parent Observation Guide

Dear Parent(s):

Welcome to our primary classroom. While you are visiting you might like to observe your child working with me, with other children, and on his or her own. You may wish to look for and make notes on some or all of the following points as you observe your child:

- Which activities did your child choose?_____
- Does your child like to work by her/himself? _____
- How long does your child stay with a particular activity? _____
- Does your child listen to and follow directions? _____
- How does your child try to join a group? _____
- How does your child share and react with other children?_____
- Does your child represent her/his ideas in different ways, e.g., writing, drawing, constructing? _____
- Is your child able to organize and care for her/his things?_____
- What changes have you noticed in your child since she/he started in our class?_____ _____
- What are some special things about your child you could tell me? (Jot down your thoughts and we can talk later.) _____ _____
- Now that you have observed in our classroom, what comments or questions do you have? (Jot down your thoughts and we can talk about them later.)_____ _____
- What did you learn or confirm about your child after observing today, e.g., I'm not the only persistent one in my family?_____ _____

Parent Observation Guide

What my child can do:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What I noticed about my child as she/he was working:_____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What I wondered about during my visit: _____

_____
_____
_____
_____

For example:

Write a list of facts about safety.

- He went up and down the rings in the gym.
- She concentrated on what she was doing.
- She took turns and showed someone else how to reach the rings.

Parent Observation Sheet

When I watched my child in the classroom, I expected to see _____

_____
_____
_____

When I watched my child in the classroom, I was surprised to see _____

_____
_____
_____

When I watched my child in the classroom, I was pleased to see _____

_____
_____
_____
_____

_____ _____

Child's Name Parent's Signature

_____

Date

Interview or Telephone Conversation Record

Student:_____ Date: _____

Informal Interview ☐ or Telephone Conversation ☐

Summary

Points Presented by Teacher	Comments by Parents
1.	
2.	
3.	

Notes on any future action

1. _____

_____

_____

2. _____

_____

_____